



Faculty of Applied and Creative Arts

**SUSTAINABLE DESIGN AWARENESS IN MALAYSIAN
GRAPHIC DESIGN SCENE**

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(Design Technology)
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This project is submitted in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of Bachelor of Applied Arts with Honours
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I certified that there is no part of this research dissertation was being used as a supporting material for any certificate or degree whether to this university or or any other higher institution.

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ABSTRACT

The main objective of this research is to increase the students and designers awareness about their role as citizen designers towards sustainability awareness. With proper guidelines and education, they will be able to practice sustainability in their designs and improving their environmental effects on the environment as well as for future generations. To investigate the development of communication design, a research will be emphasizing on turning data into visual information. Therefore, the outcome data of the questionnaires distributed to all respondents will be analyzed and integrated as visual definition used in various printed materials and promotional items in this campaign.

ABSTRAK

Objektif utama kajian ini adalah untuk meningkatkan kesedaran pelajar serta pereka tentang peranan mereka dalam isu keselamatan. Dengan panduan serta pendidikan yang betul, mereka akan dapat mempraktikkan keselamatan dalam hasil reka mereka dan ini mengurangkan kesan terhadap persekitaran untuk generasi yang akan datang. Sebagai langkah perkembangan dalam proses reka bentuk komunikasi, satu kajian akan dijalankan dengan menitikberatkan transformasi data ke dalam bentuk visual informasi. Oleh itu, hasil data yang diperoleh daripada borang soal selidik akan dianalisa serta di olah sebagai rekaan visual yang mempunyai nilai pendidikan dan akan diterapkan dalam pelbagai variasi media percetakan dalam kempen ini.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Introduction of Research

Graphic design refers to a number of artistic and professional disciplines which focus on visual communication and presentation. It also refers to creative process that combines arts and technology to communicate ideas. Graphic design is a combination of art and business. In general, graphic designers use variety of communication tools to successfully convey message from client to a particular audience. Besides presenting information in an effective way that is easy for audience to understand, graphic designers or as have two main goals. Firstly is to communicate a message to an audience and secondly is to create design that has impacts.

However, as graphic designer, it is impossible to do jobs and knowing all too well that whatever we did every day has an impact on the destruction of the planet. For example, paper is the central stuff of graphic design. Graphic designers use it for nearly everything they do and use a lot of it. From the sketches and the idea development of an advertisement till the final printed material or advertisement, paper consumption is what graphic designers could not get away with. Therefore, the issue of sustainability comes in. The term sustainability as in broad refers to the capacity to endure.

According to World Commission on the Environment and Development, sustainability is “...developments that meets the need of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs”.

Graphic designers are both makers and consumers as their power to incite change is compelling. It is essential for the graphic designers and students to be acknowledged about sustainability and to discuss project goals at length before embarking on any design projects.

Therefore, sustainable graphic design is the key. It is an application of sustainability principles to graphic design. It considers the environmental impacts of graphic design products such as packaging, printed materials and publications throughout a life cycle that includes raw material, transformation, manufacturing, transportation, use and disposal. As an example, this can be done in either using less paper, less ink or less chemical processes which these all help to reduce expenses and environmental costs.

Sustainable design considers not only the aesthetics of the finished item but the project as a whole which is before production, during production and after production. This means that graphic designers play crucial role in designing their products (packaging, printed materials and publications) and taken into considerations of the materials and methods being used.

For the past few years, design works have traditionally followed by two main principles which are aesthetics and the usefulness of functions. According to Paul Rand (1995), the legendary designer, “Visual communication of any

kind...should be seen as the embodiment and of form and function: the integration of the beautiful and the useful.”

Besides that, these two principles are also frequently being implemented and taught in visual communication design education especially in graphic design course in Malaysia higher education institution as well as graphic designers and design companies in our country.

For taking the education curriculum in graphic design as an example, in the first year, students are taught basic design and aesthetics of form, colour, composition, typography and others more through manual works. Then it develops in the second and third years into creating and developing concepts for problem solving assignments. Students are only taught real-world problem solving skills that may apply in their jobs after they graduate. Besides that, during the internship programme, students are also not eventually been taught about using more eco-friendly materials and paper in their task. It is because client requirements are the main priority and most of them do not ask for sustainable design solutions at all.

Nevertheless, how far will be the two principles, form and functions, applied by educators, graphic design students, graphic designers, print and production companies in Malaysia will be able to produce designs or works in the next higher stage which is a higher order of a good design.

Lack of client requirement and support on using environmental material on their works is also a barrier of sustainable graphic design implementation in

Malaysia. It is because before graphic designers move on to the types of materials they will be using in their projects, they have to go through the client decision first. Therefore, graphic designers or students in the related field have to be aware that they have the power to have the say about the more environmentally materials to be used because they stand between the business and the client. Thus, they can be a more green and responsible model for graphic design and also taking their first step to become the catalyst for a positive change.

Higher order of a good design is referred as green design. The main key behind a green design is sustainability. According to *Aaris Sherin (2008)*, the term sustainability can be defined in many ways, and the easiest way to describe it is as the balanced use of the natural, social and economic capital for the continued health of the planet and future generations. The role of a graphic designer goes beyond of just selling something to someone else. According to *Anna Carlile (2008)*, principal and founder of *Viola Eco-Graphic Design*, a unique company that draws its inspiration from nature in 1999, “As global citizens, we have duty to ensure that our work practices are sustainable, whatever the industry. In simple terms, it is about ensuring that the actions today do not compromise the needs of future generations.”

This is partly because graphic designers play an important role of shaping thoughts, public opinion and policy through visual communications. As global warming issues continue to increase and polar ice caps continue to melt, graphic

designers can be the catalyst for a change. This is because designers take total control over a product life cycle. According to Mackenzie, 1991, “Designers can make a significant difference to the effect of a product because they are responsible for influencing the key decisions. These determine the choice of materials; how long the product will last; how effectively it uses energy, and how easily it may be reclaimed and re-used.”

Another fact from Victor Papanek (1998), “...the wisdom to anticipate the environmental, ecological, economic and political consequences of design intervention” which specifically means that how does the design works have a moral or ethical responsibility towards the world’s environment, ecological and social issues.

Therefore, this paper goal is to serve as a wake up call for all graphic students and design related students in Malaysia higher education about their role as citizen designers by putting all the practices of sustainability into their works.

Nowadays, aesthetics and function alone are not enough to evaluate a design or determine whether a design is successful or not from the effect of globalization, such as consumerism, and the changing environment, and the exploitation of natural resources. Besides that, students also have to be more aware that their talents are not limited by solving problems in the working world but they do have larger impact on the society and environment.

We might say that our job is finished after we solve a client's problem. However, if we want to be more aware and responsible designers, we should be concerned with these questions and think comprehensively about all parts of the process of our work, as opposed to only the immediate. It is important to bring these questions as part of the design consideration and process; or even implementing them as a major part of the design decisions. Such questions are ethical questions that are open to ethical decisions that are personal.

Therefore, an awareness campaign about sustainable graphic design in Malaysia will surely upgrade the country graphic design field to a higher level and value which means design that considered of social and environmental aspects.

1.1 Problem Statement of the Research

1.1.1 There is no proper guideline or standards exist to aid in the implementation of sustainable graphic design in Malaysia

Even though social responsibilities have been discussed frequently on the visual communications and among educators nowadays, there are no standards or guidelines currently exists to aid in the implementation of these concepts in the higher education curriculum. Therefore, without sufficient awareness of how vital is the environment related to graphic design, students are tend to design without boundaries in such the way that they tend to ignore the types of paper, inks or types of bindings they used.

1.1.2 Awareness campaign in Malaysia does not elaborate or expand on the topic of sustainability among graphic designers

Lack of campaign emphasizing on sustainable graphic design issue also contributes to the ignorance of students and designers about their role in design which has an impact on the environment. Therefore, without maximum exposure to the issue, students and designers are often producing works which consumes more paper than actually needed, using non-sustainable papers, using hazardous chemical petroleum inks and others more. Besides that, awareness campaign in Malaysia is also focus more on 3R (reduce, reuse and recycle) projects.

1.1.3 Roadblocks whenever designers or students try to do anything out of the ordinary in the real world

Roadblocks refer to excuses from every part of the communications system that might stop designers or students from doing green design such as “The customer isn’t demanding it”, “It’s not in the budget.” and “the paper is too expensive.” If these questions continue to exist, then students will not be successful in becoming green designers which means that they do not get to learn how to get past these roadblocks effectively.

1.2 Objectives of Research

1.2.1 To identify what are the state of awareness sustainable graphic design among students and designers in Malaysia

By identifying what are the states of awareness or knowledge among students and designers about the term of sustainable design, it will give information for the researcher on how to produce an effective awareness campaign about sustainability that will able to bring the message across successfully.

1.2.2 To ensure that students and designers will have a clear guideline on what sustainable graphic design is as well as the methods and techniques that they can put into practices

Guidelines are important for students and designers to implement sustainability into their design or works in order to become green designers who are responsible for the environment and society. It is also essential to educate and inspire students to make more environmental-friendly choices in their work.

1.2.3 To increase awareness level

The objective of this campaign is to create awareness among students about the importance of implementing sustainability in their designs. A change in the mindset cannot be expected if one is not fully aware of the

importance of the issue. Students need to be well informed that sustainable design is crucial to avoid long-term depletion of natural resources that could lead to environmental degradation. Therefore, the needs of future generation will not being affected.

1.2.4 To analyze what is the effective approach of media to increase sustainability awareness

The right selection of media in an awareness campaign is essential. It is because if the media that is not likely to be seen by the target audience or the media that is not effective for them, thus, the important message that an awareness campaign tends to bring out will not successfully delivered to the target audience. Hence, the awareness campaign will end up by being an unsuccessful campaign. Besides that, the objectives of the related campaign will also not being able to accomplished.

1.3 Significance of the Research

This research is essential in creating awareness among students about their role as designers and also preparing them to be “citizen designers” and not just workers of employers in the future. In addition, with proper guidelines on sustainability practices in design, students will be able to embrace greener, more responsible model for graphic design no matter their jobs relates to production, layout, message hierarchy, or brand strategy.

1.4 Scope of the Research

This research will be focusing on developing effective awareness campaign on sustainable design among students. The research will also involve students from local universities that offer courses related to design field such as UNIMAS (University Malaysia Sarawak), UiTM (Universiti Teknologi MARA), LimKokwing and UPM (Universiti Putra Malaysia). The target audience will be students from age 19 to 30 years old in Malaysia whose level of education consists of foundation, diploma and also first degree level.